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SUDAN | Two Pastors, Activist Detained Incommunicado

Christian Solidarity Worldwide is concerned by the incommunicado detentions of religious leaders in Khartoum and Omdurman and a Christian activist in Khartoum.

On Dec. 19, Rev. Kwa Shamal and Rev. Hassan Abduraheem of the Sudan Church of Christ were arrested at their homes in Khartoum North and Omdurman respectively. According to local sources, the arrests were coordinated by National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) agents.

The NISS agents arrived at the clergymen's homes at approximately 7 a.m. and arrested them. No one has seen or heard from either clergyman since their arrests. Both are thought to be held in a NISS detention center.

In June 2014, Rev. Kwa Shamal made an unsuccessful appeal to the Khartoum North Commissioner to prevent the demolition of the church he led in Thiba Al Hamyida in Khartoum North which was razed to the ground after local officials gave 24 hours verbal notice of the demolition.

The detention of Rev. Shamal and Rev. Abduraheem followed the arrest of Christian activist Talahon Nigosi Kassa Ratta by NISS agents on Dec. 14 in Khartoum. A member of the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church (SEPC), Ratta was involved in organizing protests against government interference with SEPC property. In December 2014, Ratta was a member of the committee involved in organizing a vigil calling for the end of the illegal sale of the church's property. No reason was given for his arrest and his whereabouts remain unknown.

The destruction of Christian places of worship is characteristic of ongoing and systematic restrictions on the rights and freedoms of Sudan's religious minorities. The Christian community in Sudan is a primary target.

On Oct. 27, a Sudanese Church of Christ building in Karari, Omdurman was demolished by local officials without notice. According to Morning Star News, the church's leaders registered a formal complaint to the Ministry of Endowments and Religion, the body charged with overseeing religious affairs in the country, but have not received a response. On Oct. 21, a Lutheran Church in Omdurman was demolished by local officials, who gave a day's notice, and on Oct. 17, a Lutheran Church in Gadaref, East Sudan was burned down.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are deeply concerned by the coordinated arrests of Rev. Kwa Shamal, Rev. Hasssan Abduraheem and Talahon Nigosi Kassa Ratta. These men were arrested without charge and are being detained incommunicado in direct violation of their right to liberty and security of person, as articulated in article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Sudan is a party. Their confinement amounts to arbitrary detention and we call for their immediate and unconditional release. We also call on the international community, in particular the African Union to hold Sudan to its international obligations."